

**OFFICE OF RURAL HEALTH SERVICES
ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES (SPECIAL MEETING)
Friday, February 25, 2005, Crisp Regional Hospital, Cordele, Georgia**

Presiding: Wayne Martin, Chairman

Present: Tony L. Brown
Valerie Buchanan
Dianne Banister
Valerie Buchanan
W. Kent Guion, M.D. (by phone)
Joseph Hobbs, M.D. (by phone)
James A. Hotz, M.D.
Raymond J. Otis, M.D.

ORHS Staff: Shaundra Smith-McKeithen
Marlene York

Visitors: James W. Couch, Chief, Health Improvement Programs, Georgia Department
of Community Health (DCH)
Vi Naylor, Georgia Hospital Association (GHA)
Peggy W. Pierce, CEO, Calhoun Memorial Hospital
Pam Reynolds, Director, Southwest Georgia (SOWEGA) AHEC
Rita Salain, Consultant (by phone)
Harley Smith, CEO, Miller County Hospital
Tina Anderson-Smith, Georgia Health Policy Center (GHPC)
Robert Vick, Program Director, Office of Emergency Medical Services (EMS),
Division of Public Health, Georgia Department of Human Resources
(DPH/DHR)

Welcome and Opening Remarks

A special meeting of the Office of Rural Health Services' (ORHS') Advisory Board was held on Friday, February 25, 2005, at Crisp Regional Hospital in Cordele, Georgia. Chairman Wayne Martin called the meeting to order at 10:40 a.m. Mr. Martin welcomed everyone and asked for a brief introduction from each attendee.

Mr. Martin gave a brief reviewed of the August 20, 2004, ORHS Advisory Board meeting for attendees, indicating information was reported on the medically needy and estate recovery. He further stated that Ben Robinson, Executive Director, Georgia Board for Physician Workforce/State Medical Education Board, discussed shortage issues in Georgia and Tina Anderson-Smith spoke on the *Georgia Rural Healthcare Plan*.

Welcome and Opening Remarks (cont'd.)

He also gave a brief overview of two articles in the February 25, 2005, issue of the *Cordele Dispatch* on what a difference getting care makes.

Mr. Martin informed the group that Mr. Bo Smith, CEO of Berrien County Hospital in Nashville, Georgia, and former ORHS Advisory Board member, passed away on Thursday, February 24, apparently of a heart attack.

Minutes of August 20, 2004, Meeting

With two minor corrections from Chairman Martin, the minutes of the August 20, 2004, Advisory Board Meeting were approved.

Remarks

Mr. Martin introduced Mr. James W. Couch, Georgia DCH's Chief, Health Improvement Programs. Mr. Couch thanked Mr. Martin for helping to develop a plan to keep ORHS operational following the resignation of Isiah Lineberry in January 2005. Mr. Couch stated Tony L. Brown had agreed to serve as Interim Executive Director.

Mr. Brown indicated that he is an employee of Crisp Regional Hospital on loan to DCH until such time a permanent replacement is hired. Mr. Brown stated that his vision for ORHS is to:

- Advocate for rural and underserved areas of Georgia;
- Become a resource center for providers;
- Listen to all stakeholders through committee assignments and regular meetings; and
- Report to the Advisory Board on committee issues/outcomes.

Tony also shared the following regarding ORHS grant submissions:

- The **Georgia Farmworker Health Program (GFHP)** grant was submitted to the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), December 30, 2004, with \$2.2 million requested in Federal funds;
- The **State Office of Rural Health (SORH)** grant was submitted January 14, 2005, for \$150,000 Federal funds requested;
- The **Primary Care Office Co-operative (PCO)** agreement was submitted to HRSA on February 3, 2005, for \$223,483 in Federal funds;
- The **Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility (FLEX)** grant was submitted to HRSA on February 14, 2005, for \$700,000 in Federal funds; and
- The **Small Rural Hospital Improvement Program (SHIP)** grant is to be submitted to HRSA by March 14, 2005, with a request for approximately \$530,000 in Federal funds.

Mr. Brown advised the Board that within members' packets are:

- Jerry Coopey's email regarding HRSA's goals for FY 2005-2010 along with personnel changes;
- HRSA's budget from 2004-2006, with an increase in community health centers (CHCs) funding and a decrease in rural health funding;
- A *200 Poorest Counties* table, including 21 Georgia counties (HRSA will give special consideration to these 200 counties);
- An American Hospital Association's (AHA's) *Rural and Critical Access Hospitals* bulletin; and
- An updated Georgia CAH map.

Administrative Update

Resignation of Executive Director

Mr. Couch indicated a great deal has transpired since the August 20 Advisory Board meeting including the resignation of ORHS' Executive Director.

Stakeholders' Meeting, December 16-17, 2004

Mr. Couch stated that he and Commissioner Burgess met with representatives from the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (Marcia Brand, Tom Morris, Steve Hirsch; Jim Bernstein [North Carolina], and others), for four hours on December 16, 2004, to discuss their concerns regarding ORHS. On December 17, 2004, ORHS stakeholders, by invitation only, met with the same Federal representative at DCH for four hours to candidly discuss issues/ideas relating to the Office of Rural Health Services. A "vision" was developed based on two main areas:

- 1) Work out ways to get things done that ORHS/DCH have not done, i.e., contracts; and
- 2) Discuss the future of ORHS and rural health and alleviate problems.

Ms. Buchanan asked why ORHS Advisory Board members were not invited to this meeting. Mr. Couch stated Mr. Martin was in attendance for the Advisory Board.

FLEX Stakeholders' Meeting, January 20, 2005

Mr. Couch indicated that a FLEX stakeholders' meeting was held in Cordele on January 20, 2005, to discuss the upcoming Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility Program non-competing grant application submission. Ms. Rita Salain led the meeting. To create a strategy, stakeholders were asked their input. Data from an ORHS survey was available. Also, Mr. Martin stated that at this meeting he brought up the possibility of GHA (or a portion of GHA) being an advocate for rural hospitals in a way they have not done before.

Consultant Progress – HPSA, FLEX, J-1 Visa Waiver

- Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) designation data for Georgia has been submitted but not the Dental Professional Shortage Area (DPSA); and
- Ten J-1 Visa Waiver applications have been processed since October 1, 2004, and three have been approved

Status of FLEX Grant

At this point, Mr. Couch distributed the FLEX grant, submitted February 14, 2005, for attendees review and consideration. He asked Ms. Salain to give a briefing on the grant proposal. According to Mr. Couch, Ms. Salain had access to everyone at DCH as she prepared the document. With only 40 pages available for the grant proposal, Ms. Salain stated it was hard to do justice to all the good ideas. She stated that the maximum of \$700,000 was requested with no program receiving less than \$150,000. The grant proposal was limited to 40 pages and had to address:

- Recruitment;
- A better system of tracking progress; and
- A summary of programs – 35 CAHs. (After December 31, 2005, no more CAHs will be approved and there is a great deal of work to do by September 1, 2005 [grant start date], to make the CAH eligibles ready.)

Ms. Salain detailed what the prior objectives/current progress of this grant has been along with what is being proposed to strengthen ORHS and it's partners through new directions, which will be undertaken once the grant is reviewed/considered attainable/approved:

PRIOR OBJECTIVES

*Georgia Rural Health Plan
Designation of Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs)
Develop/Implement Rural Health Networks
Improve/Integrate Emergency Medical Services
Quality of Care (quality improvement assistance)
Support/Sustain CAHs
Program Evaluation*

NEW OBJECTIVES

*Develop GA's Strategic Plan for RH/Update Existing RH Plan
Support Existing CAHs/Assist CAHs in Designation Pipeline
Develop/Implement Rural Health Networks
Improve/Integrate Emergency Medical Services
Improve Quality of Care
Program Evaluation*

As a component of the grant, \$250,000 is to be directed to GHA, which has promised to commit \$192,000 towards the development of a *Center for Rural Health Transformation*. Dr. Hotz indicated concerns relative to GHA commitment to rural hospitals. Peggy Pierce, CEO of Calhoun County Hospital, also indicated her concern regarding GHA's willingness to be timely and responsive to rural hospitals' issues. She further stated that this component of the proposal is a gamble and may fail. She mentioned that Calhoun County Hospital is one of the most rural hospitals in Georgia and is dealing with major issues. She stated that she knows she can get immediate assistance from Hometown Health when needed; however, it unknown if GHA would be as responsive. (It was mentioned that Mr. Jimmy Lewis [Hometown Health] transmitted a three-page email stating that giving funding to GHA is a misapplication of FLEX funds.) Ms. Salain feels strongly that this arrangement with GHA will work.

Vi Naylor with GHA states the organization wants a strong Office of Rural Health Services. She believes that GHA through the Center would be the "go to" group for issues involving rural hospitals. The Center would be a 501(3c) through PHA and as such would be able to stand up for rural hospitals.

It was noted that \$683,000 was unexpended on contracts through FLEX, and ORHS received \$50,000 due to these unexpended funds. Mr. Couch stated that all FLEX-funded contracts are now executed prior to the proposal being submitted to HRSA. By March 3, a financial status report (FSR) is to be prepared detailing grant expenditures. Hopefully, \$178,000 can be reapplied.

Ms. Salain indicated that she worked within DCH to secure Departmental support and create a DCH team for rural health. Hopefully, this team approach will allow more integration with ORHS partners. This DCH/Rural Health Team would be comprised of:

- Jim Connolly, Institutional Reimbursement/Financial Management
- Kathy Driggers, Managed Care and Quality
- Norma Jane Morgan, Aging and Community Services

Ms. Salain stated that if anyone has questions or comments to please email her (ritasalain@earthlink.net) or Mr. Couch (jcouch@dch.state.ga.us)

Status of SHIP Contracts

Relating to the SHIP contracts, (\$9,474 each), all have been executed.

Future Status of ORHS and Staff

Mr. Couch indicated that there are eight candidates for the Executive Director position. If anyone wishes to make a recommendation, please send that recommendation to Commissioner Burgess and Mr. Martin no later than Monday, February 28, 2005. It is anticipated that interviews with Mr. Burgess will begin within 10 days and the appointment made within three weeks. Mr. Couch said that the new Executive Director would select his/her staff beginning with the five key vacant positions.

Future Status of ORHS Advisory Board

It was noted that the ORHS Advisory Board needs to re-visit itself. Membership should be active and members able to see the complete (rural health) picture. Current members were advised to contact Mr. Burgess and Mr. Martin regarding their interest, either by mail or email, regarding their wish interest in remaining on the Board. It was recommended that the Advisory Board should be heavily weighed with hospital CEOs.

Closing Remarks

Moving on, Mr. Couch reviewed the *Primary Care Access Plan's* top 40 (Georgia) counties with the Advisory Board. He stated that an updated *Rural Health Plan* is needed, and he recently met with Tina Anderson-Smith of the Georgia Rural Health Policy to get them involved in the process.

It was announced that Dr. Elizabeth Duke has resigned.

It was requested that a copy of the *Evaluation Report* on the 2004 FLEX grant be copied and given to Advisory Board members.

Date of Next Advisory Board Meeting

It was decided that the next Advisory Board meeting would be scheduled at a later date. It was decided that the next Advisory Board meeting would not be scheduled until the Executive Director has been appointed.

There being no further business or public comments, the meeting adjourned at 2:15 p.m.

Respectfully,

Wayne Martin, Chairman/Date

Marlene York, Recording/Date

Valerie Buchanan
ORHS Advisory Board Secretary